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[now playing the role of heroic beer-saver]



A MILLION STORIES

the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board (PLCB), the go-to — storming the joints with armed agents and carrying away kegs of sweet, sweet beer to fill their police storage facilities. And like the **good drunker** we are, last week we were pleased to report to read that it starts **Hans** can either **read the book** or **play the role** out.

Not as pleasant as we would have been of the **controversial** role, say, **stitching** the **PLCB**, but, hey, small victories.

In a hearing about the early March raids on three Philly bars — as it turned out, at least some of the **misadventure** from the **Memphis Taproom**, **Local 44** and **Resurrection Ale House** was in fact on the **PLCB's** list — **state Rep. John Taylor** took after **Rep. John Latta**, the **PLCB** director, that's according to his 1800 man. "To have four armed agents go into a small establishment about the kind of violation is a **misuse of manpower**."

To which Latta responded: "With all due respect to these three bars, there are a lot of others that we go into that may not have that particular check, and there is no danger."

That got our antennae twitching. **Could beer poisoning** really be that dangerous? We searched newspaper archives looking for incidents in which **BLAZE** agents had driven their guns or beat off assaults, but found nothing. So, we called Latta and asked him

"What I tried to point out was, when we go into these bars, we're no longer **unarmed**," he says. In a crowded bar, full of people who are, by definition, drinking, it's possible that some **half-assed douche** will attempt to play **heroic beer-saver**. We'll grant that. We'll also let him point out that the **explosion** wasn't driven, and that's wasn't carrying one. And, we'll acknowledge that, if you're going to beat a **branch of heavy kegs** out of a bar, it might be wise to have one of those rap on your arm. It'll seem a little heavy-handed to us, considering these aren't bars where the boys play **Bud Light** **Golden Wheat** or whatever **Anheuser-Busch** is engaged in these days — but guys will be guys.

Anything else you'd care to tell us, Mayor? I don't write the law, I enforce them. "These laws, he continues, "can be somewhat **complicated**." I go back to the first that I don't write them, but I have to enforce them. "And, he continues, his officers play by the same rules as the rest of us — at which point you begin to wonder if maybe he thinks we should scrap **this ridiculous system**, too.

Sadly, at that same hearing last week, the lawmakers also agreed that the registration system was **basically fine**. Sigh.

> ADVENTURES IN JOURNALISM

Say you work for *The Philadelphia Inquirer* or the *Daily News*. And say, because you are human, you have a Facebook account with which you share the meaningless minutiae of your daily life, how **quirky** and **cute** you are for a nonpublic broadcast, how your editor is a jerk (but who doesn't appreciate your **beautiful words**), how you had three oops over the night last night.

Well, your boss at *Philadelphia Newspaper LLC* (PNSL) would like you to know that **they're watching**. Last week, *mediatime*.com.org posted a memo that PNSL sent to all of its employees regarding a new **social-networking policy**, which — at least the version posted on-line — doesn't tell us too much of anything about what the actual policy is, but does make explicitly clear that PNSL understands what a **social-networking** site is. And that's important.

Says the memo: "PNSL encourages its employees to **internet** **knowledgeably** and **responsibly** socially online where such use supports the goals and objectives of PNSL." These guidelines are intended to help you make appropriate decisions about **work-related** blogging, personal websites, postings in video and picture-sharing sites, on the comments or responses you make online on blogs and elsewhere on the public Internet, and other social-networking activities in which you may engage."

We read PNSL's statement through the *A Million Stories*. **Corporate-Spinax Decoder** (a test post), which responded to the **Confusion** translation: "Don't embarrass us."

Seems simple enough — unless you're **Pat Rocco**, head of the *Newspaper Guild Local 58413*, which represents newspaper employees. In a letter posted on the Guild's website (local-49.com), Rocco, who didn't return our phone calls, said PNSL "to the extent the policy applies to non-work related activities of our members, it is **unlawful** because it **improperly** and **unlawfully** **interferes** with our members' right to express their personal views. To the extent the policy seeks to subject our members to discipline for charges for work-related activities, the employer does not have the **unlawful** right to impose such to review and conditions of employment without bargaining in good faith." We'll keep you posted.

• This week's report by Jeffrey C. Palmer and Emily Griener. E-mail us at entertainment@paper.net



man overboard!
By Jason Thompson

NEEDED: RICH DUDES

NEED WEEK, PHILADELPHIA: Mayor Nighthawk Cohn will explain to the *Philadelphia* his **Gaming** Control Board why it should extend **Paradise**, casino licorice when his town has been **dearly** **unstable** to investors for the **showing** **not**. Cohn needs rich dudes, and he needs them fast. So what else today, rich dudes? Maybe they are something like **Gaming Board**, the **legislature** and **Gov. Ed Rendell** do not think **gambling** is not an **industry** but a tax — on the reallocation of people **into** a strange state of **gaming** up in response amounts of **money** at slot machines. And maybe they're something that **some** **disenfranchisement** **conventionally** support **perhaps** **Philadelphia** was **crisis**. Sugar boats it under construction, and **Pat** in **Paradise**, already **open**.

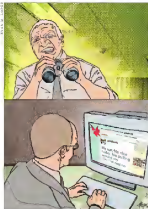
The question — what's the **game**? — is to clear out that you're thinking **leaders** would be asking it, too. But so far they haven't. Major **water** **up** **ago** made clear that he took over with **Paradise** **waterfront** location, but not **not** **business** **area**, **state** **Sen. Larry Piness**, whose district encompasses both casinos, has called for **Paradise** **license** to be **revoked**. But says it should be held in a new location.

Here's another idea: Why not make **lottery** **it**? A recent study commissioned by the **Fade** **and** **Paradise** **State** of **Philadelphia**, which offers **concessions** of both **pre** and **post** **concessions** that provided it, concluded that it was **unwise** to let whether the **beneficial** **casinos** **reopening** the **state** — it **is** **not** **not** **openly** **legitimate** **addition** **and** **money** — to the **community** **that** **near** them. The decision factor it noted was whether they drew persons from other areas.

It's not to be **screened**, especially **luckily** we don't have to **apologize** about when our casino patrons will come from. During a 2008 presentation to the **Gaming Board**, **Pat** — **profiting** **congress** **Mayor** **Pat** **Conrad** — **quoted** that "nearly all" of the "most players" lived within 25 miles of the casinos, and that most themselves of the patrons had within 25 miles of the **Paradise** or **Sugarloaf** sites. **Paradise** isn't expected to generate money, it's expected to draw it from us and our neighbors, to be divided up between the state and our rich dudes, right? To be rich.

But which rich? They're all **biting**, why the hell are we?

• Jason Thompson could use some rich dudes of his own. E-mail him at entertainment@paper.net





64688-197815-4.1

GAGA OF THE WESTERN
MORMON: Conservative Board
member Dan Claggett
pictured here outside
Martin Luther King High
School in North Platte, a
sister Pittsburgh re-
sidential school, as his claim to
the "conservative" curriculum

Conditions générales

THE PITTSBURGH STORY

Dan Onorato wants to take the Rendell route to Hamburg. By Dan Hirschhorn

► **EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is the second (of two) conceptual articles in the *Little Business Management* section, including for your use.

He just came from a disbarment, and now he's off to talk to Temple University students. On this warm April evening, less than six weeks remain before the Democratic primary for governor — a contest that, by some accounts, Quince has been working to win since Gov. Ed Rendell was elected to a second term back in 2006.

With little time to spare, O'neer is the Allegheny County native who hails from Pittsburgh, is cross-countrying the state—a specialty of the Philadelphia region, where most voters don't know him—and, importantly, where 45 percent of Democrats' primary votes happen to live. "In the past few years all of the fieldwork we put in, all the meet-and-greets, the exposure on TV, it's all coming together," O'neer says, smiling a Coke

know who's been paying attention — although, according to polling data, not many people do — knows that Gore's tie to the Senate was the May 18 primary, similar to such a thing as the Jan. March Primary in the Marshall College poll, only 11 percent of respondents picked him, the other candidates were in single digits and "unknowns" claimed 71 percent. He was the favorite two years ago when he began laying the groundwork in earnest. And while candidates have come and gone from the race, Gore has been like a rock. As much as it's lamented, many reactions, and Gore has a book. At — he finished March with 10 times the amount of campaign cash that rival Arizona Governor Jack Wagner has. He's also only one-third of his staff, as he sold office throughout the state.

And like the man he's trying to succeed, Obama has the kind of local economic revitalization story that voters buy. None other than President Obama gave Obama the platform to show it off last year, when he chose Pittsburgh to host the G-20 summit, heralding it as a model for how cities across the world should revitalize

in a 21st-century economy 'He's got a good narrative to tell,' says longtime politician and Franklin & Marshall public affairs professor Terry McDermott. 'Hessell told the Philadelphia story, and the Philadelphia story was back from the brink of bankruptcy, all the historical, cultural and economic development that took place. Ontario has a similar story that's very appealing.'

The story is one that has been chronicled in-depth elsewhere, and there's plenty of legitimate debate about how much credit Oursers deserve. In short, a region that seemed hopelessly tied to old-school industrial manufacturing didn't pivot to a hub for health care, technology and pharmaceutical dollars, allowing Allegheny County to successfully outperform the state and national averages.

Politics is narrative, and Onorato has the money to tell his.

As he travels the state. And so this article went to press, the money myth which Oregonator told it was already beginning to speak louder than words. The first candidate to an television ads statewide, polls showed that a wide-open, four-way race was beginning to take its first bite. A Binghamton Polling & Research survey released on April 14, after Oregonator's ads had been running for a couple weeks, showed him starting to 20 percent of the vote.

"He's put himself in the strongest position by far," longtime Democratic political consultant David Duerksen says.

That doesn't mean Operato is without critics — far from it. He's a conservative Democrat in the Bob Casey mold, whose positions often don't sit well with Philly liberals. He is a Catholic who serves

ally opposed abortion, but says that he won't allow any changes to state laws governing abortion access as he has won a seat on the court for which he's taken some heat from fellow candidates Montgomery County Commissioner Joe Rosfield. The real test, he professed, is free liberal. As a Western Pennsylvania native, Ontario supports those doctors with patients who've been shut out with Philly's desire to get U.S. off the street. But — with abortion — he's taken pains to make clear that he supports tougher laws as best and states, you need child safety laws. Rosfield, he says, "You have a better chance passing that with a Democrat than from the seat."

For a moment, the frustration of a man who has had to explain himself over and over again comes to the surface. "I have some opponents and their supporters who are distorting my positions," he says. "There are very moderate positions."

And there's the other question: Just how much credit should Obama get for that reversal that's become a centerpiece of his TV ads and the national press clip he campaign aides distribute with glee? Bill Gross, a Pittsburgh political analyst who has worked for Republican in the past, says not much at all.

"I don't quite put that economic claim that he talks about," Green says. "That community transitioned size if from the '60s, and it takes 25 years to make that change. We went from steel and industrial to education and pharmaceuticals. But you don't just as up your finger. That transition wasn't necessarily government-driven. It was entrepreneurial-driven."

Atgomery County Council President Richard Fitzgerald, a Democrat and a close Ocasio ally, scoffs at talk like that. Ocasio deserves "the lion's share of the credit. It's been Diana's vision and it's been Diana's working with the business community that's revitalized the county," he says, ticking off examples of companies that came to be sited in the area under Ocasio's watch. "You can't be a Senator."

Fitzgerald cites U.S. Steel, which had planned to move out of Allegheny County before Onco's promise: there those per-
mitting processes for a new plant would get a prompt yes or no, rather than staying in the traditional govt. limbo. Now, they're building an expansion in Chariton, outside of Pittsburgh. Similarly, Allegheny Technologies Incorporated is building another plant in Blacksville.

"We've got at least \$3 billion of new construction," Fingersh says. "That's bigger than our stadium, our convention center

and everything else, said and. It's not de-
termines as people don't see it every day, but there are
the kind of economic growth initiatives that Das
Ocasio deserves credit for."

Ocasio, for his part, says he's willing to share
the credit — even if he doesn't in his memoirs. He
"I was the county executive during the turn-
around," he says. "I was part of that turnaround.
I don't think any one person can claim credit for it;
it was all of us working together. But I can tell
you that if the region had gone the other direc-
tion, I certainly would have been blamed for it."

In fact, politicians almost always get too much
credit when a complex, intertwined economy
goes up, and too much blame when it goes south.
— *Editor* is an opinion, success has many fathers.
The point is that politics is about a narrative, and
Ocasio has the story and the money to tell it.

Should Ocasio prevail next month, how-
ever, there is another step not on the map that
Republicans will try and tie him to — and it's not
the drink tax Ocasio passed that led to some-
thing of a working-class revolt. Rather, it's the tax
still in effect, Gov. Ed Rendell.

Everywhere except the Philly region, Rendell is
politically toxic, his approval ratings in the toilet
with voters tired of 130-day budget standoffs in
Harrisburg. And yet, as much as Rendell as he's
critical and Ocasio often says from it, that's
simply no denying that Ocasio is Rendell's favored

candidate. The money machine
that catapulted Rendell to office
is largely behind Ocasio. As
Franklin & Marshall's Madonia
put it, "Clearly the governor
opposed Ocasio for Dies, and he
shouted through."

Whether Ocasio will repre-
sent a third term for Rendell, as
Republicans will surely argue, is a
completely different story — polit-
ically and stylistically, the two
could hardly be more different.

But that doesn't stop his
opponents from painting him
as Rendell's heir, as Republicans
surely plan to do. "We have our
own governing styles. I do things
my way, he does things his way,"
Ocasio says.

While Ocasio shares
Rendell's wishful ability to
talk policy, he doesn't share the
governor's love for unfiltered
political chatter.

"This is nothing but a ride-
or-here," he says.

(Continued on page 10)

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(Europe Street photo)

EXIT THROUGH THE GIFT SHOP is a new film by director James L. Newson. The film is a comedy-drama about a man who is forced to work in a gift shop. The film is currently in theaters and is available on DVD and Blu-ray. For more information, visit the film's website at exitthroughthegiftshop.com.

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BOON

THE CITY'S GENEROSITY HAS COME BACK TO HAUNT US.



ON JAN. 14, 2012, City Council President Anna Verna is scheduled to retire from office and collect a going-away present from the city—a lump-sum cash bonus of \$344,777. But she doesn't have to stay retired for long.

If Verna stays for office again in 2013 and leaves, she can return for one day, make a deposit at the bank, and then go back to work the next day. Jan. 15, 2012, and resume collecting her salary of \$246,090. Or Verna, who will be 60 years old, could stay retired and collect her annual pension of \$133,704. Either way, Verna will be a lot richer. And all she had to do to earn that big cash bonus was sign a city contract scheduling a future retirement date she perfectly fine to ignore.

Under the city's overvalued pension system, this payout is entirely legal. While Verna's bonus will be the largest reward ever under the city's Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DRO), it's just another windfall in a billion-dollar run on the city's already depleted pension fund.

DRO is the 14-year-old city program that allows

municipal employees to double-dip on retirement benefits during their last four years on the job. Employees who sign up for DRO collect their full salaries for a maximum of 48 months, plus a maximum of 48 months of pension benefits paid in the form of a lump-sum cash bonus the day they walk out the door. They also get a maximum of five years of health insurance, plus their regular pensions. And the city has allowed a select few like Verna, to return to work—at full salary—the day after they retire.

Who would turn down a deal like that?

Benefits obtained by City Paper show that between 2000 and Feb. 1, 2010, more than 6,000 city employees retired under DRO and collected cash bonuses that averaged \$108,277 each, for a total of \$720 million. Moreover, 3,167 additional city employees—including Verna and five other City Council members—are currently enrolled in DRO. If those 3,167 employees stay in the program the maximum four years, they'll collect cash bonuses that average \$160,035 each, for a total of \$508 million.

That's more than a billion dollars in payouts.

Those giveaways are happening as the city faces huge budget gaps into the foreseeable future—\$150 million this year—and as Mayor Michael Nutter has proposed new taxes on sales and trash collection, and the city is already diverting revenues from a 3-cent increase in the local sales tax passed last year just to pay for city employees' pensions.

As a City Paper investigation shows, DRO may be a great deal for municipal employees, but for taxpayers, it makes no sense to extend benefits with lavish cash bonuses just for showing up—even if the city doesn't have enough cash on hand to balance its budget or pay for regular pensions.

IN HUNDREY TRAIN

To grasp the financial impact of DRO, City Paper asked Joe Boyle, a Philadelphia-area attorney—a

financial expert who specializes in pension plans and risk management—to do an independent analysis of DRO. The program was originally billed as "cost-neutral" when it was unanimously passed by City Council and signed into law that same day, June 28, 1998, by former Mayor Ed Rendell. This newspaper made the request because the city's actuarial consultants have either avoided the issue or the cost of DRO, or given contradictory data in their reports.

Boyle analyzed more than 1,000 pages of documents, representing a dozen years of internal reports on the city's pension system, as well as three reports on DRO. His conclusion: DRO is "a runaway freight train."

If the city were a business, Boyle says, safeguards enacted by the Federal Pension Protection Act of 2004 would have looked

THE CITY'S CONSULTANTS HAVE GIVEN CONTRADICTORY DATA IN THEIR REPORTS.

as, in all lump-sum payments and credits for future service would have been cut off until the pension system's funding level reached 40 percent—meaning, when the pension fund had 40 cents on the back for every dollar it owes in future pension obligations. As of 2009, the city pension system's funding level was just 45 percent.

But since this is a governmental program, those rules don't apply. DRO is anything but cost-neutral, Boyle says. It's also far more expensive than the city's pensions have let on.

The traditional way to measure the cost of a pension plan, Boyle says, is to compare the sum of annual contributions to the pension fund (from both taxpayers and employees) to the city's annual payroll—\$1.4 billion in 2009. In 1998, the year before the city adopted DRO, the annual cost of pensions equaled 25 percent of the city's payroll. By 2009, that percentage had risen to about

BY RALPH CIPRIANO

OGGILE

43 percent. If you include the annual payments the city makes on a \$1.25-billion bond it took out in 1999 — six months before enacting DROP — to bolster the pension system, the true cost rises to 48 percent of the city's payroll, Boyle says.

Behind the Board of Pension and Retirement, which oversees the pension fund, "The pension board has completely mismanaged this plan by not addressing the rising costs."

In the private sector, pension funds met between 3 percent and 10 percent of companies' payroll costs. "Having a cost of 48 percent [disproportionate for pensions would] be insupportable," Boyle says. And, he says, DROP lost to be a big factor in those rising costs.

City Finance Director Rob DeRose, who the chairmen of the pension board, agrees that the rising cost of pensions is the biggest financial problem facing the city. "It's gone up dramatically and put pressure on our entire budget," he says in an interview.

However, he says, the city pension board doesn't determine employee benefits, they're set by labor contracts and city ordinances. He also disagrees about the role played by DROP — if DROP is a problem, he says, it's just a small part of the city's overall pension woes.

COMPOUNDING ERRORS

The temporary god of DROP programs adopted across the country in the last few decades was to retain veteran police and fire fighters who were taking early retirements, collecting their pensions and then moving on to new jobs in the private sector. The thinking was, why not create a bond double-dip that would keep police and firefighters in their government jobs? But here in Philadelphia, the pension board decided to open its DROP program to all city employees regardless of whether they were a uniform, including even elected officials.

The results have been disastrous.

In 1999, the pension board sent out a letter informing city employees that they were now eligible to enroll in DROP "PLEASE BE PATIENT," the letter said. "WE EXPECT SEVERAL HUNDRED APPLICATIONS."

The first week, more than 1,000 employees signed up. It's been a stampede ever since, unfettered by both city officials and the consultants from Mercer Inc. who advised them.

"Somebody like our pensioners were exceeded," says Kenneth A. Kent, the city's lead consultant of several firms, which he advised pension officials from 1995 until 2010, with the exception of 2005 and 2006. Kent says the economy may have had "an impact on people's behavior."

DROP has been a failure with regard to its two originally stated goals. It isn't cost-neutral, and it hasn't induced workers to stay on the job longer. Instead, it's had the opposite effect.

In 1999, the year the city adopted DROP, new uniformed city employees retired at an average age of 60.1. By 2005, the most recent figures available, non-uniformed employees left their jobs at 57.25; non-uniformed employees make up 67 percent of DROP enrollees.

"It took it makes sense before you offer a new pension benefit, you would understand what the cost would be," says DeRose, appointed by Nutter in 2008. "I don't know how they looked at it back then." He says that Nutter has hired Boston College professor "what impact DROP had on employee behavior and costs."

The city made a few other miscalculations when it set up DROP. Back in 1999, the city's actuaries projected the pension fund would rise a 9 percent return on its investments every year. That turned out to be overly optimistic. Over the next three years, investment returns have averaged less than 4 percent a year.

Kent says that Philadelphia is hardly alone. "If

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFFREY CRONKOST

your handy guide to the program that is devouring the city's budget



- 1 The Selected Retirement Plan allows city workers who agree to retire within five years of enrolling to collect up to four years of pension benefits — plus interest — in a lump-sum cash payout the day they retire.
- 2 As of Feb. 1, 6,745 Philadelphia employees have either retired or are enrolled in DROP. Collectively, their bonuses will equal up to \$1.5 billion.
- 3 DROP enrollees collect their full salaries while in the program, and the other city employees receive their full pensions and a retirement of two years of health insurance after their retire.
- 4 Over the last decade, the city has allowed 40 high-wage employees, including former Police Commissioner Sylvester Jackson, to retire for a day, collect their DROP bonuses and return to work.
- 5 Six City Council members are presently enrolled in DROP. Upon their retirement in 2011 and 2012, they will receive bonuses of between \$154,517 and \$584,777.
- 6 The city is projected to receive in 2010 that DROP had either saved the city as much as \$60 million or lost it as much as \$20.4 million.



THE CITY'S FINANCIAL CONSULTANTS' PROJECTIONS WERE OFF BY \$4.5 BILLION.

you're looking at averages statistically," he says, "a lot of funds have in average return that's below their assumption."

City officials also decided in 1999 that half of those projected future earnings should go to people enrolled in DRIOF. While employees are enrolled in DRIOF, their future benefits are collected in a deferred city account that pays a guaranteed 4.5 percent interest — compared monthly averaging to 4.58 percent per year. So, even with the company tucked and the pension plan put money in the stock market — as it did in four of the last nine years — employees in the DRIOF program still collected their 4.5 percent interest every month.

Based on theory, assuming 4.5 percent return, the city's consultants projected in 2000 that the pension plan's deficit would swell to \$4.5 billion by 2010.

They were off by \$4.5 billion.

Similar miscalculations have resulted in legal troubles on other parts of the country for Mercer Inc., the firm that set up Philadelphia's DRIOF program. Mercer has been the defendant in employee lawsuits filed in Milwaukee County Wis., and in Georgia and Alaska. In Milwaukee, a former *Chicago Tribune* Mercer over another expensive DRIOF program resulted in a settlement last year of \$45 million. The lawyer who negotiated that settlement for Milwaukee told *City Paper* it appears that Mercer made the same mistake in Philadelphia that it did in Milwaukee (see sidebar, p. 18).

RECKONING

The city's pension fund, like its budget, is in dire straits. Last year, Nutter asked the Pennsylvania Employees Retirement Commission (PERC) to declare the city pension fund "severely distressed," setting the table for a future state takeover. PERC

complied, but talks in Harrisburg about the state taking over the city pension fund "did not go anywhere," Dalton says.

As of 2009, the city owed more than \$10 billion in pension obligations to more than 65,000 beneficiaries. For comparison, this year's city budget is \$3.74 billion. The pensioners' unfunded liabilities equaled \$4.9 billion in 2009. That's not only more than the entire city budget, but also more than the \$4 billion that the pension system had left in assets.

The city also can't afford the annual contributions required to fund its pension system. As funded last month in Nutter's five-year financial plan, the city will defer \$155 million of its 2010 pension obligations, and \$60 million in additional obligations in 2011. The city will begin paying that money back into the pension fund in 2014, at an interest rate of 4.25 percent.

Even with those adjustments, taxpayers are paying \$350 million this year to fund city pensions. According to the mayor's five-year plan, taxpayer contributions to the pension fund will rise to \$480 million in 2011, \$540 million in 2012, \$607 million in 2013 and \$660 million in 2014. The city also is drawing revenues from a "temporary" 1 cent increase in the local sales tax approved last year by the state to raise an additional \$500 million between 2013 and 2014 just to pay for the pension costs of Philadelphia municipal employees.

And that's not the extent of the taxpayers' bill. A big chunk of the pensioners' assets come from the \$1.25 billion bond that the city devoted in January 1999, six months before City Council adopted the DRIOF program. This City Treasurer Gary Kemp denied any connection between lending up the pension fund and the future DRIOF payments. Kemp said the timing was coincidental, and the city needed the money to prop up a shuttered funded pension system.

In 2005, Kemp was convicted of 27 counts of embezzlement, was fired, lost federal and reelection for another public office for personal gain. He did not respond to a letter *City Paper* sent to the federal prison in Ashland, Ky., where Kemp is serving a 10-year sentence, seeking comment.

The city took out that \$1.25 billion bond — the largest municipal bond issue in state history — at an interest rate of 4.61 percent. The bond boosted the city's pension funding level to 77 percent by 2006

But that was before the city began paying out hundreds of millions of dollars in lump-sum DRIOF payments and before the pension funds money managers lost more than a billion dollars last year in the stock market.

Now, the funding level of the pension plan is down to 45 percent, and taxpayers are still paying off that bond. Between 1999 and 2009, the city spent more than \$850 million to pay down the debt, but there's still a way to go. In the 2011 budget, the city will pay \$114 million toward that debt. And for the following 16 years, taxpayers will pay about \$130 million annually. By the time the 30-year bond is paid off in 2029, taxpayers will have spent nearly \$3.5 billion.

MATERIAL COSTS

The legislation that created an experimental DRIOF program in 1999 stipulated that "the impact of the plan will not result in more

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\$139,137.42	MICHAEL FUELLING, AUTOMOTIVE DRIVER, \$34,807/year
\$211,829.18	JOSEPH NICHOLS, POLICE TOW TRUCK DRIVER, \$42,467/year
\$139,714.44	JOHN COLES, DEPARTMENTAL HYDRAULIC CLERK, \$34,007/year
\$221,906.03	DOANE SMITH, POLICE COMMUNICATIONS SUPERVISOR, \$36,596/year
\$279,795.59	PAUL COON, SANITATION COLLECTIONS ASSISTANT ADMIN, \$63,815/year
\$305,246.81	WILLIE WILLIAMS, FIRE BATTALION CHIEF, \$38,523/year
\$242,952.27	JOSEPH CUTLER, DRIVE & ALCOHOL ABUSE PROGRAM INCH, \$73,467/year
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CORRUPT AND CONTENTED

In recent years, both the city of San Diego and the county of Milwaukee adopted expensive DRDP programs, just as Philadelphia did. But in San Diego and Milwaukee, publicly over big DRDP because sparked taxpayer revolt, criminal indictments, court battles, recall drives and a negligence lawsuit against an external consultant — Merrow Inc., the same company that set up Philadelphia's DRDP — that resulted in a settlement of \$45 million.

Philadelphia, it seems, could learn a lot from these experiences. But, is it late?

San Diego passed its DRDP program in 1997. Like in Philadelphia, the San Diego DRDP was supposed to be cost-neutral. In 2008, the mayor and city council rescinded the program for all new employees.

"It was an interim program that was supposed to have cost-neutrality study before it was approved," says J. Goldsmith, the San Diego city attorney, told City Paper. In fact, San Diego officials feared that study and made the program permanent without knowing the price tag.

In Philadelphia, DRDP was made permanent in 2004, even though its in-depth study was over done about its future cost to offset on employee behavior. The program was supposed to be cost-neutral, but had already cost taxpayers at least \$64 million.

In San Diego, DRDP also provided a legal war between the city and its police union that ended when a federal appeals court ruled that the city had the right to make DRDP cost-neutral by reducing the salaries of police officers. The program and a state superior court judge allowed the city to reduce

the interest rate paid to DRDP employees.

That wasn't the only defeat. Members of the San Diego pension board that approved DRDP were hit with two waves of indictments. Sixteen members were charged with conflicts of interest for approving a program from which they would directly benefit.

In January, an appeals court dropped charges against five of six pension board members, ruling that they did not have an actual conflict because their interests in approving DRDP were the same as the city workers they represented. But the San Diego pension board isn't clear yet. Three pension board members still face fraud charges in a federal indictment.

San Diego has already had our email and we're dealing with it," Goldsmith says. "Just with you look, because these pension issues are difficult."

Goldsmith's counterpart in Philadelphia, City Solicitor Stanley Smith, declined to comment on whether actions could result by San Diego — or Milwaukee County — could be done here.

In Milwaukee, county officials filed a federal negligence lawsuit against Merrow Inc., the consultant that set up DRDP programs both there and in Philadelphia, and last year collected a \$45 million settlement. In their suit, Milwaukee county officials alleged that they had not been properly advised about the full cost of long-term DRDP benefits and related benefits.

"The county would have pulled the plug," the lawsuit alleged, "if Merrow had warned that the costs were too high for the county to pay or that it hadn't studied the costs."

After a brief review of Philadelphia pension and DRDP records, James Southwick, the Merrow

attorney who negotiated Milwaukee's \$45 million settlement with Merrow, says he recognizes a familiar storyline.

"It looks like here again, as in Milwaukee, Merrow knew it, in terms of how it [DRDP] would affect employees here," Southwick says.

His advice to Philadelphia officials Collins. "You need to give it a little," Southwick says. "It's not really worth it for the city to talk to lawyers and sue. We have a client here?"

The big question, Southwick says, is, "Where we given bad information?" Did [DRDP] blow up in our face because we weren't given bad information?"

Milwaukee County isn't the only government with complaints about Merrow, a top human resources company with 4,000 employees and 150 offices around the world. In December, The New York Times reported what it described as "a bombshell of a lawsuit" in which the Alaska Retirement Management Board, a state agency, is suing Merrow for allegedly making repeated mistakes in setting up the state's retirement plan for its workers, and then attempting to cover up those mistakes.

In response, according to the Times, Merrow contended making an error was calculations that it used to determine the cost of automatic employees' health care benefits, and said that its failure to discover that error was "a mistake in judgment, not misconduct with the company's corporate culture." The state agency, however, says that mistakes calculations and the attempts to cover it up resulted in the state agency under-reporting the contributions needed to maintain the pension fund by \$2.6 billion. So the state agency is seeking \$2.6 billion in damages in

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS



4-Corrupt and Contested

As a result, two projects—a federal trial scheduled for July in Denver. If the state wins, the Times reported, Mercer could also be liable for punitive damages.

In Philadelphia, city officials acting on Mercer's advice were wrong on several projections—on how many employees would sign up, on whether the program would be cost-neutral, on whether it would reduce workers to retire later.

Attorney Southwest suggests that Philadelphia consider hiring a new actuary.

SINCE 2006, with the exception of two years, Philadelphia has generally relied on the counsel of one expert. Kenneth A. Kent set up the Philly DRDP as a Mercer employee, before he became a consulting advisor to Chieftain of Malvern, Va., Philadelphia's current actuarial consulting firm. Between 2001 and 2007, the city paid \$2.3 million to Mercer Inc., and from 2008 to 2010, another \$234,096 to Chieftain.

In an interview, Kent defended his work in Philadelphia. He says it was up to the pension board to anticipate how many employees would retire under DRDP, although Kent did advise pension board members on that subject, and he presumably doing a study on how DRDP affected employee behavior. He adds that over the past decade, "I haven't looking at averages, statistically a lot of funds have an average return that below their assumption."

Philadelphia officials have remained loyal to Kent, even though Mercer didn't.

While at Mercer, Kent became entangled in another pension lawsuit filed in federal court in Atlanta, Ga., by the United Food and Commercial Workers Union and Employees Pension Fund, which represented 133,000 grocery store workers. In the lawsuit, the pension fund charged that because of "incorrect information" received from Mercer, the fund had "incurred benefits when it should not have," and that Mercer had "underestimated, omitted or misstated" future liabilities by "use of estimates of dollars."

Kent was the lead actuary on the account from 1989 until Mercer fired him in December 2004, according to court papers. The documents say the union pension fund was "Mr. Kent's biggest account."

"According to Mr. Kent... the cost of the benefits promised to participants exceeded the employer's contributions and the fund's investment returns were insufficient to make up the shortfall."

In a 2004 letter to the pension board trustees, Kent wrote that "programming errors in [Mercer's] valuation system" had resulted in a miscalculation that "underestimated the fund's liabilities by \$54 million."

Mercer offered to settle for \$2.25 million, but was turned down by the pension fund. The case went to trial in 2008, and, ultimately, a federal jury found the union and Mercer equally liable for negligence, and awarded no damages.

According to court papers filed in that lawsuit, "In early 2003, Mercer dropped Mr. Kent of his

PHILLY REMAINED LOYAL TO KENT, THOUGH MERCER DIDN'T.

supervisory responsibilities, describing any future pension issues and limited his salary increases." To Mercer employed, Mercer required Mr. Kent to assign another senior consultant to each of his clients and fully comply with Mercer's quality control procedures. Mercer fired Kent due to his failure to adequately satisfy these conditions. Mercer's "detrimental" to clients, this member was merely Mercer's party line."

In an interview, Kent says he has deliberated over "maintaining the highest professional standards of practice and integrity." He says the allegations in court papers were "false assumptions," that he lost his job as part of downsizing at Mercer, and that he was never fired. He says he was never stripped of supervisory responsibilities and that he continued to receive money. He adds that the client was so upset about Kent's departure that they promptly fired Mercer.

The city continues to defend Kent. "We are not

at all very comfortable with the work he's done for us," says Bob Deane, city finance director and chairman of the city pension board.

IN PHILADELPHIA, AVERY citizen watchdog movement driven that gathered more than 70,000 signatures. They forced the resignation of County Executive F. Thomas Arnesen, who was scheduled to retire in 2008 with a \$3 million cushion, but was ousted under fire in 2002 without any DRDP money. Citizens also voted to recall seven members of the county board of supervisors who had voted for DRDP.

In 2004, the county's business resources director—the creator of Malvern's DRDP program—was indicted and pleaded no contest to a conspiracy count of embezzlement in office, and two additional embezzlement related to his role as the pension deal, according to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. He was fined \$11,000 and sentenced to 30 days in jail.

In contrast, here in "corrupt and contested" Philadelphia, as marketing journalist Lizabeth Shellen famously described the city in 1994, there has been an citizens uprising over DRDP. Rather than reform the program or investigate the circumstances under which it was supposedly performed, elected officials, such as former Mayor John Street, elected City Paper in 2005. "We will ultimately end the DRDP program"—have passed the people down to the municipal funding through.

Street retired in 2008 and collected his DRDP bonus of \$454,960.

Three members of the city pension board that voted to make DRDP permanent in 2004 have also retired and collected DRDP benefits. Two former pension board members—city Personnel Director Lynda Orsini, who retired in 2006, and collected \$367,941, and Charles Johnson, a union representative on the pension board, who retired in 2001 and collected \$233,323, three years before he voted as a pension board member to keep DRDP. Carol G. Shaker of District Council 47 retired in 2009 as a police officer under DRDP and collected a \$230,205 bonus. Shaker still serves on the pension board as a volunteer. She did not receive a recall from City Paper seeking cessation.

—Ralph Clapton



LAST YEAR, THE CITY LOST \$1.2 BILLION WHILE PAYING \$28 MILLION TO 150 MONEY MANAGERS.

tion an "unintended increase" to the city's annual cost of funding pensions, and if it did, the program was supposed to be stopped.

Had. And it wasn't.

In 2004, the Board of Pension and Retirement voted 5-3 to make DRDP permanent, even though the city's actuary hadleterned that the first four years of the program had added \$94 million to the pension fund's deficit (the city's major retirement plan, DRDP's bill even higher, at \$123 million).

The pension board is composed of four appointed city officials, four union representatives and the city controller, an elected official who often acts as a tiebreaker.

In 2004, a representative of then City Controller Jonathan Siskel sided with four union representatives on the retirement issue. DRDP promises a Siskel told City Paper in 2004 that he figured the \$64 million was an "unintended increase" but was not intended to less than 1 percent of what the city owed at the time in future pension obligations, \$6.7 billion.

Since then, the city's actuary has refused to reconsider the issue. "It was the board's determination that the DRDP costs represented an *unintended increase* in the City's annual cost of annually funding the Retirement System and the program was continued," declared actuary Kent and Christian Boushous of CB's name, a financial services firm based in McLean, Va., in their most recent DRDP "program study" in April 2006. "Our report does not revisit the financial implications or the basis of the Board's decision," they wrote, in bold print.

There was no requirement after that point in time to conduct a similar analysis," Kent explains in an interview.

In fact, since 2005 report, the actuary made the confusing claim that the DRDP program had either saved the city as much as \$60 million, or cost it as much as \$201.4 million. "Our expectation is that there was a DRDP, the system's expenses would be somewhere between those two values," they wrote.

Kent says the actuary presented a wide cost range in their report because they did not know for sure how DRDP was affecting employee behavior. There was a "large rush" at the beginning of the program, Kent says, but lately "it's dropped off a bit" and the employees enrolled in the program "are definitely not staying the full four years, on average."

Dubow defends Kent's view, while the city had started while he was employed by Mercer and continued after he joined Citicorp.

"We are actually very comfortable with the work he's done for us," Dubow says.

But Boyle, the actuary who has signed DRDP for three companies, calls Kent's estimates "nonsensical," because it's completely unclear in their reports how the city's taxpayers will ever benefit from DRDP.

At City Paper's request, Boyle clarified the actual cost of the DRDP payouts. According to his calculations, at the height of the DRDP craze, the program created an average annual liability of \$1 billion a year between 2002 and 2005, before declining to \$425 million in 2007 and \$650 million in 2008.

Moreover, Boyle says the city could have saved about \$340 million over the last decade by cutting the fat out of DRDP and the pension system's bloated administrative costs. Between 2000 and 2004, the city spent more than \$68 million to pay that guaranteed 4.5 percent rate to every employee enrolled in DRDP. Had the city cut that rate to a more reasonable number — say, 1.5 percent, more than you'd get in a money market today — taxpayers would have saved \$40 million, Boyle says. (Boyle points out that that 4.5 percent interest rate is set by city law, and can only be changed by City Council.)

Additionally, between 1998 and 2005, the city spent \$72 million on in-house administration to oversee its pension plan. Had the city brought administrators costs in line with industry standards, Boyle says, it could have saved as much as \$45 million.

Over the last dozen years, the city's top spend more than \$300 million on outside investment managers

and consultants. Last year, when the city's pension fund recorded a loss of \$1.2 billion in the stock market, the city spent \$38 million on 150 money managers, according to city officials.

According to Christopher McDonough, the city's chief investment officer, "It's not uncommon" for cities to use multiple investment managers.

Boyle, however, says the city is wasting money on all these money managers, and could have saved \$150 million over the last dozen years by investing in standard endowments, such as the S&P 500 or the Barclays Aggregate Bond Fund. While the city's pension fund managers and consultants averaged an annual return on investments of 7.55 percent over that dozen-year period, Boyle's figures show that a conventional 60-40 investment split of stocks and bonds would have performed slightly better, with an annual return of 4.12 percent.

McDonough says that a more passive investment strategy "is

— continued on page 32

DROP RETIREES

REDUCED DROP PAYMENTS IN 2009: RETIREE AS OF 2010

\$100,802.53	WILLIAM WILSON, CLERK 3 \$39,500/year
\$211,681.98	JOSEPH BARTON, BOARD OF REVENUE OF TAXED MARRIED, \$60,400/year
\$98,568.86	LAURA ELLIS, POLICE DISTRICT CAPTAIN \$75,000/year
\$91,452.02	WYATT JONES, WORD PROCESSING \$67,200/year
\$195,984.10	WALTER KENNEDY, INTERVIEW \$45,400/year
\$110,979.84	WILLIAM SMITH, BUDGET OFFICER 1 \$45,000/year
\$163,876.06	GABRIEL TERRY, LIBRARIAN 2 \$45,400/year
\$292,622.21	WILLIAM WILSON, CAREER PROSECU- TOR, \$82,600/year
\$7,063.06	WILLIAM WILSON, SCHOOL COUNSELOR \$45,400/year
\$165,573.92	GREGORY SCHULTZ, FIREFIGHTER \$47,500/year

— continued on page 32



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THE DECISION TO ENTER DROP IS "IR-REVOCABLE," BUT NOT EVERYONE HAS TO PLAY BY THOSE RULES.

something we have looked at a lot of ways to look at. "He says our problem with pension strategies is that they require a static cash flow, while the city's revenue situation is constantly changing."

Dubois adds that "a full pension approach" to investments would "produce savings," but also "would have cost us returns."

While Boyle's investment return statistics are based on a 12-year review, the city did its own study based on a 10-year review. That study shows that money managers averaged an annual 1.73 percent return, compared to a 40-45 percent split that it calculated at just 1.96 percent on annual returns.

IN THE DOUBLE DIP

If Council President James Watson dies today, he'll be following in a colleague's footsteps: Councilwoman Joie Kaprielian retired her day in 2008, collected a \$274,587 DROP bonus, and went back to work the next day. The watchdog group Committee for Effective Campaigns has actions. But last year, City Solicitor Sheldy South issued a legal opinion that defended Kaprielian. DROP doesn't discriminate against elected officials, South opined.

The decision to enter DROP, however, was supposed to be "irrevocable." The first question in the DROP brochure the city distributed to employees asks, "What if I don't want to participate in DROP, or I don't want to stop after four years?"

The answer: "Your election to participate in DROP is irrevocable. Once you officially enroll in DROP, you must remain within four years of your enrollment date."

But not everybody has to play by those rules. Kravitz is one of 49 high-profile officials on the part-

ty list that the city has allowed to retire five days before their DROP bonuses, and go back to work. Mayor John Street granted the first two exceptions in 2003. He exempted his chosen for police commissioner and deputy police commissioner, Sylvester Johnson and Robert J. Mitchell. Street said the two cops were too valuable to let them retire. But they got to keep their retirement bonuses.

The city then began exempting employees on a case-by-case basis. Former City Solicitor Kenneth L. Darr opened the door for elected officials by allowing Kravitz and City Commissioner Marge Tartagline to run for re-election in 2007, even though both were enrolled in DROP. Last month, City Council voted unanimously to exempt its elected officials from enrolling in DROP during their loophole for all future elected officials—but not for current officials. This is, however, political theater. State lawmakers have already passed a law to reform Philadelphia's DROP program by disallowing elected officials from it.

Besides Verma, five other City Council members are presently enrolled in DROP and are scheduled to retire in 2013 or 2012. Councilman Manton Tamm, slated to collect \$478,087, Councilman Frank DeCane, \$424,408, Councilman Jack Kelly \$299,163, Councilwoman Thomas Miller, \$145,742, and Councilman Frank Rizzo, \$144,527.

Verma retired DROP on Jan. 14, 2008, signing a contract that required her to retire over the next 48 months. She had 56 years on the city's employ including eight years as City Council. Because of her many years of service, Verma qualified for a pension equal to 100 percent of her salary, or \$133,769. (This year, Verma's salary was raised to \$148,896, but her annual pension will stay at \$133,769. Employees on DROP don't get credit toward their pensions for additional years on the job, or pay raises after their enrollment.)

Verma hasn't made up her mind yet whether she's going to run again, because she's working day and night on the city's budget crisis, says Ting Hawthorne, City Council communications director.

Verma declined to discuss her DROP bonus with City Paper.

Verma has previously defended her cash bonus of \$584,777. "I've been working for the city for years and I have put money into the pension program," Remondel Philadelphiaphil Weekly last year. "The DROP money is, in essence, my money I'm not taking the city as has

been portrayed, to give me a bunch of money and I'm going to walk out of City Hall. That's my money and I've worked hard for it."

In other words, she's entitled. But is that money in DROP really her money?

Hardly. A closer look at how DROP operates reveals why the program is no disaster on the pension fund.

The problem is that the pension plan receives no outside funding. City employees make only two nominal contributions to the fund that pay for their pensions—between 1.8 percent and 7.5 percent of their salaries. The city then contributes about 35 percent of the employees' salaries to the pension fund. But when employees enroll in DROP, the city treats them as if they just retired, and begins paying into the deferred account an amount equal to 100 percent of each employee's annual pension, plus the guaranteed 4.5 percent interest rate (compounded monthly).

So, every year a new employee enrolls in DROP, the pension fund takes a bigger hit.

In Verma's case, if DROP did not exist and she retired on Jan. 14, 2012, during her final four years on the job she would have made a total of \$575,731 in salary. But she also would have had to contribute 7.5 percent of her salary to the pension fund—\$10,734 a year or \$43,119 over four years. During that same four-year period, the city would have made contributions to the pension fund on Verma's behalf equal to 32.7 percent of her annual salary, according to the city pension officials, \$43,340 a year or \$169,360 over

PHILADELPHIA'S BUDGET CRISIS



- A. \$1.05 BILLION: CASH DROP RETIREES 2000-2012
- B. \$1.02 BILLION: CITY'S PUBLIC SAFETY BUDGET FOR 2012
- C. \$2.7 BILLION: CITY'S BUDGET FOR 2012
- D. \$4.5 BILLION: CITY'S PENSION FUND
- E. \$10.0 BILLION: PHILADELPHIA'S LIABILITIES



“WE’RE GOING TOWARD BANKRUPTCY. AND A STATE TAKEOVER,” SAYS BOYLE.

four years. Without DROP, Verma’s salary and pension benefits over four years — minus the amount she would have contributed to the pension fund — add up to \$703,545.

With DROP, Verma continues to draw the same salary — \$375,731. But there’s another benefit taking credit in DROP — she no longer has to contribute to the city pension fund. For Verma, that amounts to a 7.5 percent raise of \$30,794 a year or \$40,179 over four years. Meanwhile, the city continues to pump 100 percent of her annual pension — plus the guaranteed 4.5 percent interest rate — into her deferred account, about \$146,394 per year or \$584,777 over four years. That means that over the four years she’s in DROP, between her salary less DROP cash bonus and the money she no longer has to contribute to the city’s pension fund, Verma’s double-dip will cost the city \$1,203,647.

That’s an extra \$562,139, or just over 8.745 percent of present DROP enrollment.

And how much of that was her money? During Verma’s first 34 years as a city worker, her contributions to the pension fund amounted to slightly less than \$150,000 — about 25 percent of her DROP bonus.

In response, Finance director Dubow argued that the money “being deducted into that DROP account is the pension payment [employees] have earned under the city’s pension system.”

■ HIDDEN COSTS

There are other hidden costs to DROP and the city’s pension plan. Under Social Security’s most private pension plan, if you survive up to three years before you turn 60, your pension is reduced by 30 percent. But in Philadelphia, there’s no penalty for retiring early. And, as contrast to Verma, that’s what most DROP enrollees are doing.

The most recent statistics available show that the

city’s non-enrolled employees are retiring at an average of 57 years of age, while cops and firefighters are retiring at an average age of 52.8. That’s another problem for taxpayers, because DROP enrollees are going out the door long before Medicare kicks in at age 65, and every retiring Philadelphia employee gets a minimum of five years of health insurance.

A 2008 study by the Pew Charitable Trusts found that of the 10 major cities it surveyed, Philadelphia paid the most in health care costs per retiree — \$9,150 in 2006, nearly twice the median cost in that survey, \$5,792.

That same study reported that Philadelphia’s non-enrolled employees make relatively small contributions to the pension fund — only 1.46 percent of their annual salaries, compared to 7.5 percent in Boston, 4.5 percent in Chicago and 9 percent in San Francisco. (That’s 5 percent that non-enrolled employees and 7.5 percent that elected officials pay a dollar less than their peers in other major cities.)

Dubow points out that the city recently got the police union to increase officers’ annual pension contributions by 1 percent. He says the city is working similar agreements in ongoing contract talks with three other city unions.

But that doesn’t entirely erase like Boyle, the attorney. He says the pension board is shirking its primary responsibility — protecting the pensions of the funds’ 45,462 beneficiaries — in favor of an “investment scheme” that benefits the 8,745 past and present DROP enrollees. By continuing to pay DROP cash bonuses with money it simply doesn’t have, Boyle says, the city jeopardizes the health of the entire pension plan.

Dubow says the “investment scheme” “isn’t too far” — “The DROP is about taxing us when people start getting their retirement benefits,” he writes in an e-mail. “How does that make it an investment scheme?”

Boyle says he’s worried about beneficiaries like his mother, an 81-year-old widow who lives off the \$16,000 annual city pension left behind by Boyle’s father, a civil engineer.

DROP enrollees are also a burden on the pension system because they’re taking home more than their share of benefits. Only 13 percent of the pension’s beneficiaries are enrolled in DROP, but these employees are departing City Hall with 25 percent of the pension fund’s assets.

Dubow says that’s an “apple to oranges” comparison. “The problem is comparisons would be pension payments to DROP participants to all participants over the same period.”

Those figures, however, are not available in any of the city’s external reports, Boyle says.

Berkes County President Vito Strup noted last year that DROP bonuses are scheduled to go to Carl Ogley, deputy executive director of the Philadelphia Parking Authority, who will collect \$504,526; Chief Police Inspector Richard Balkus, \$654,739; and Chief Police Inspector Joseph O’Carroll, \$609,536. (All are scheduled to retire in 2013, and all declined to comment for this story.)

But you don’t have to be at the top of the city pay scale to reap a windfall under DROP. Take Margaret Taylor, a city zoning board who earns \$11,48 a day. When she’s scheduled to retire in June 24, 2014, Taylor will receive a DROP cash bonus of \$56,253.

Because the city creates overtime in determining DROP payments, Charles Robinson, a semi-retired Streets Department laborer who draws a salary of \$34,607 but works up an average of \$62,561 in overtime, will have his job in 2011 within check for \$173,797. Ernest Volante, a \$43,497-a-year heavy equipment operator who earns an average of \$34,000 in overtime, will retire in 2012 and expect \$266,378. And Nicholas Harris, a \$40,816-a-year correctional officer who earns an average of \$60,794 in overtime, will retire in 2011 and get a DROP bonus of \$100,813.

If DROP is, as Boyle says, a runaway freight train, where’s it headed? “We’re going toward bankruptcy,” Boyle says. “And a state takeover.”

(Contributor: N.Y. Observer staff)

THE LONG GOODBYE

ANNA VERMA’S DEBITORS DOLL - DOLL

	IN \$1 DROP	IN DROP
A. SALARY	\$375,731	\$375,731
B. VERMA’S CONTRIBUTION TO PENSION	\$0	\$43,179
C. CITY’S CONTRIBUTION TO PENSION	\$564,777	\$168,896
TOTAL*	\$1,203,647	\$703,545



DIFFERENCE = \$502,139

*Over 30 years, Anna Verma’s contributions to the city’s pension fund equaled \$150,000, or just \$150,000. This table is without DROP = A + B + C



Apple stole it. Alice Oh's three-dimensional fractals of Conceptual Origami really resonated. "This is what a laptop should look like." The pale, soft geometry of the molecule-like composition pictured a 201 suggestiveness in the most complex way possible. They could do as well as their hand-edged theoretical science ends where fragile biological processes begin. Robert Ruloff's sophisticated assemblages, key to computer with his public art, smoothly present stark silhouettes that include disk interior collage elements. It is at a

www.konrad-zeisler.de

"There's more happiness in my life in it seems natural there should be more happiness in my music," he muses politely. "Just being older has a lot to do with it. The other thing is I've got a family now. I've got a 7-year-old daughter, and that just takes you out of your own mind. I think a lot of the unhappiness you have when you're younger is because you're just looking at your own mind. Once you have a kid, you can't be that way. All your little hang-ups, and your little insecurities, they just go away."



Specificity of response was

*Quarrygate Pri., April 25, 8 p.m., E.E. Smith-Lee's Weekly, Johnny Bonair's, 1804 N. Franklin Ave. 477-491 5849, johnsmithlee@aol.com.

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onpointe
 CP dance review

> OUT OF STEP

Before the start of *BalletX's* opening night performances, co-director Christine Cox announced that two of their dancers got injured during rehearsals. Not exactly good news, except that the unfortunate circumstance left us opening for Matthew Prescott to join us. Prescott was a past visit with the company last summer, and let me tell you, he's marvelous.

Yet the program proved uneven: The technical expertise was formidable as usual, but certain pieces just didn't hit enough high notes.

Male, choreographed by Uta's great Luciana Patti, is meant to be about "the deconstruction of human interaction in the universe." It's a bold and all too common theme of young dancers: others looking to make profound statements with their art. Patti crafted lots of patterns to keep things busy, but the consensus demonstrating how to take actions and create lipdips in courtship personal relationships felt dated.

Myra Bessell and Monica Perreault's *Curry Me a Teaching* that portraying parent-child love and role reversal due to illness. It's seen it before and found it elegant presentation. Cox performed it here with Jennifer Davidson, who replaced a injured dancer.

arts & entertainment

The duo was dramatic in the point of rehearsal, which demonstrated the emotional impact.

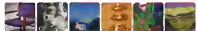
Cox's audience for *Y*, performed to classical, Latin and Afro-Cuban music, offered playful visualizations of the music through body movement. Arise and legs spread and shut, bod-worshipped and entangled play in a dance space appeared and disappeared in step with the music accompaniment. The results was a delightful work with colorfulness.

Young Don's graceful, popular *One Word Play* was another program highlight. Don introduced it to convey how "we use and manipulate words to construct our identity and power" and while that message was indeed successful, the piece was abstract enough that you could derive many other meanings, including the notion of trying to grab onto things you can't quite catch. *Word*, April 14, Wilson Theater

—Derek Koseroff

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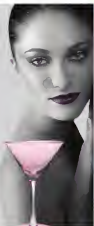
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+WAYNE SHORTER

With most contemporary programming driven from *Arts & Business* to be fairly to be product of a fusion of East and West, perhaps one "ethnic" conversation that Bay Area Theater's mind-blowing work in quite such a fusion theater. A simple conversation with the "legality" straightforwardness can be as dense and ungraspable as his improvisations, bursting unexpectedly through science fiction, ethnic, movie, books, or those film in his narrative leap from one bizarre connection to another. The same could apply to Shuster talks on the PMA's East Asia art collection, from which he drew inspiration for a newly commissioned music position for his new record project, *Eastman* (penned by David Byrne, Leonard John, Princeton and drummer Brian Baker). The museum has already several notable music projects to reflect on, with the art in its galleries, thereby drawing together its ethnic and performance series – most notably, *Asian Fusion*. Museum's multimedia exploration of the Bay's Greek gods. But with Shuster, *Asian Fusion* the most influential foreign art project, a kind of artist whose stature aligns with some of those mentioned in its title.

—Ehrensen, W.

Ex. April 22, 3-45 and 7 (1) p.m. - EM Philadelphia Museum of Art 1900 Ben Franklin Parkway
844 763 6100 info@americanmuse.com

• AN HORSE

Shyne's *Am I Black?* cut classic traps into vibrant and rowdy rap as his pop-punk posse did you'd owe to certain flows, they've got that snappy, off-beat sense seemingly intrinsic to any reach setup (e.g. "Wye Oak, Queens, Mines of Blue"), plus it'll be the usefulness you'll expect from their hip-hop-fueled boosters ("Queens, Mines, Death City") but they also took it up with a new form of rap — the *Bole* sound, an melody rap in their additively looney rap-to-club music. "Crazy Rap" (with pop's classic, cultural rap sound makeover) on their new *Bole* (streaming) CD.

—Dr. William H. Northrup.

Wed. April 22, 8 p.m., EW 111, with Andy King and Ralph Hayes and the Great Problems TLA, 230 South St. 311.697.1011, www.tla.com.

data & entertainment

► [rock/pop](#)

✦ THE SPINNING LEAVES

Just Gettes and Richard B. Berman to look on the bright side of life. Their first record as The Spinning Leaves is called *Lower*. Their songs are pastoral and upbeat, like a cheeper Gillen Weich. And have you watched *West Side Story*, seeing profiles of the duo as When Gettes and Baker Folk Parade of North Country of choice in Love Story.



— Judith Weisman

Sun April 25 7p.m. 215 with Hershkoff, Jovanov and Chris Kane
and Billie Robinson Co. 803 N. Oakwood Ave. www.rockwell.com

► [rock/pop/new music](#)

✦ OWEN PALLETT

For Acetone (Domest), its recycling is a total latex op, Toronto's own Acetone Latex ranges to the mid-1980s. Owen Pallet went big, employing the Great Symphony of the 1980s and a battery of wood into production and electrochemical reactions in a general chain-pipe cycle which, despite its lateness, was away from the easy sustainability of the Plastics in a house of the 1980s. Acetone Latex is now in a house of the 1980s, Acetone Latex is now in a house of the 1980s, Acetone Latex is now in a house of the 1980s.

—E. Peter Hoffmann

See April 22, 8 p.m. St. 4 with Damsel, Garbino, and
Lucy. Full Damsel, St. 437-438 (both) - damsel.com

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TRUE BLUE: David White has left his mark on television. His new show is called *Lunk*, starring *Queer as Folk* star

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(continued)

KING DAVID

David Milch, creator of *NYFD Blue* and *Deadwood*, speaks. **By Sam Adams**

DAVID MILCH | Wed., April 26, 6:30 p.m., Thu. April 27, 5:30 a.m., free
reservations required. chicagotheatre.org/online | Midway Western House,
3900 Lawrence Blvd., 815.327.8040, info@chicagotheatre.org

From *NHL Never Back to Back* to *Deadwood*, David Milch has left a formidable mark on television. A composer's wife, teacher as well as a recovering heroin addict and compulsive gambler, Milch creates detailed worlds that move to their own rhythms. After a hiatus following *Deadwood*'s conclusion and unexpected surf documentary from *Crumb*, he is shooting his first for HBO's horse racing drama *Luck*, starring Dustin Hoffman. Milch visits us a Kelly Writers House for a lecture, followed by the book *The Science of*

City Paper: You've talked a lot about the importance of mentors in your life. What do you hope to get across when you talk to students or young women?

David Nikke: I think that it was Joyce who said that paternity is less a matter of blood than an apostolic succession. Just as someone reached out to me, were he to be an exemplary father — that is, everything that [Robert Penn] Warren and also R. W. Lewis and Clementine Beckett did — it was their romance and their



sense of responsibility and that they took seriously an obligation to try to communicate to someone who obviously had much less to give back to them than they had to give to us. That was something that I treasured then, and as the years have gone on have come to understand in so many different ways as something that I can best express in gratitude for its divine likeness.

GP: You bring a lot of personal history to *Luck*. You've joked that if you were \$25 million on the show, that will just about cover your research costs.

Q&A: It was a difficult moment that I will regret as much as the IRS will appreciate it. I've been involved in horse racing one way or another since I was a little boy and like my most recent of several world ... over the course of time it develops its own dynamics and rules and observations. I'm delighted that I have won, that I have some familiarity to these things, but at the same time, that familiarity is only important or positive

worldright. All the old obligations remain in terms of how the story crosses the human spirit.

DM: You know, as Marion, Cuervo's alter ego in *Heart of Darkness*, remarks, the jungle will find out what you're doing there. That's true of *Spanish*, too. For me, *It's early morning* read easily marked, so I'm glad to have a big canvas to work on and to let the music find out what I'm doing there.

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dj nights

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T One-off	e Electro	L Latin	T Top 40
N/C No Charge	e Experimental	P Progressive	S Hip-Hop/R&B
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BAT, APRIL 24
VESAGO
MOON Park Avenue Ball, w/ Doctor Octo-Pussy, Mighty Mike Saps, DJ 25, Domain Plague, Michael Myxar, Nick Cremo, Molliar, Jay Shuk, Xru Shuk, 15 before 11 p.m., \$10 after that. I remember being a young buck and going to a few Vesago parties, so it's pretty crazy that this event is still going down. Now the Futuro! Collective presents Vesago's 15-year anniversary and their return to monthly status, so more than Octopus is ready to turn you out on the regular. There will be all kinds of attractions, including burlesque and live-fire performances, and video projections from No-Garage Plan, it's 18-plus to get in!

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meal ticket's
Notes
 FROM THE WEEKEND
 Eat or drink anything good this weekend?
 We want to hear about it!
 citypage.net/notes

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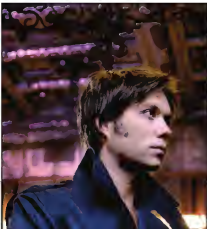
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PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

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[illegible]

Why? So they can make our town look good when New York's polluted air...
 ...to breathe through for music-themed trivia challenge. Tunes where this
 really performs for "I can't stand a quizmaster, so like to think that I have
 some answerability," says producer and location boss Tamara. The grand prize
 is \$200 (and a "winning points" card). The real prize comes from knowing
 that you possess more useful knowledge than anyone else in the room. ☺
 See April 23, 8:30 a.m. 270 State Street, 302-239-9141, 215-272-1400
www.boston.com

—Julia Ward

never break the chain

➤ THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME

Luo Diwany is the *Male of a Thousand Faces* (soprano) of the *Immortal*—both an actor and singer at 1900 Nanyang Cinema in the 1920s and an adaptation of *The Romance of the Mobile Disc* (Andrew Goss, music director) at the First Presbyterian Church with possible assistance by accompanying the film on organ. Seen again: *The Nourishment of Mobile Discs* takes place in Shing Shing Hotel building, and now in a Shing Shing building, not just part of mobile screen. *1917, April 23, 7:30 p.m.* First Presbyterian Church in Hoboken (p.3). 2017.8.21.615.02. 251-647-0927. Available: www.1917.org

—Karl Kautsky



(circling around)

► CHITSALES

[illegible]

—Daily Carrier



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➤ **TECMO SUPER BOWL NINTENDO TOURNAMENT**

[illegible]

—Sam Kucera



When comparing the

PAUL SMITH

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Journal of Internal Medicine 255: 111–117

5 OCEAN-FACE DARTS With the spring with a fresh lure, meeting 2003 SC Tigs. Make an appointment on Wed., April 23rd and receive the Japanese Storm Fish Ma Up Pool. \$100 (including credit and two freshwater products) for \$100. Wed., April 23 11am - 1900. 2000 SC Bay, 400 W. Lancaster Ave. Rialto, CA 92401 951-287-1000

[illegible]

• PHILADELPHIA: VINTAGE'S 20th anniversary celebration features vintage from designers like Vivienne Westwood and Yves St. Laurent, as well as dated clothing from everyday brands. Call 800national1 or go to www.PhoenixVintage.com.
2025 Locust St., 215-383-3732

Y HALL-BOJENNY SAUTHERN
CELEBRATIONS: To celebrate his
Earth Day, Sauter gave away light
bulbs to his wife's friends to help
save money and the environment.

It's a rare opportunity to find a location in a neighborhood of North City, like everything I usually find. Exchange is putting these lovely, short-term on sale for just a buck. All proceeds will go to a Hispanic Society group on East Avenue, and sales below \$10 will be given to, Say, Age 40, 21 Days, www.buffaloexchange.com, Buffalo Exchange, 1710 Chestnut Street, 715-447-0000.

• THE PEOPLE OF ETHIOPIA
Follows the photographer's journey
in Ethiopia by Helen Elyak. The
exhibit celebrates the true story
surrounding of some of the world's poorest
and women in Ethiopia. A documentary
made in Ethiopia. All of the money
from the sale of the exhibit will go to
help the people of Ethiopia.
The exhibit is open from April
10 to May 10, 2008. Hours are
10am - 6pm. Tickets are \$10.
Location: The National Museum,
Addis Ababa.

9. UNIVERSAL DESIGN STYLE EXPO AND SAMPLE WOODS DOWN SCALE: The Windsor's Boutique is hosting a wedding gown sample sale where 300 new gowns for all sizes and budgets between \$100 to \$200! The event begins on Wed. 4/26/12 and ends on Sat. Apr 28 11am-4pm. \$10 The Windsor's Boutique, 11922 Spring Garden St., (714) 944-7000



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portioncontrol

By Carolyn Marvin

YOU SHAD
ME AT HELLO

► **FIGHTTOWN'S SHAD FEST** is only a couple of days away from being a two-year institution, but Paul Kington says he's about firing the fuse — with music, profits, tanks, displays and a booth actually serving the stuff — instead of just shoveling it.

"It is such a fancy title. Why honor it?" people asked Karpot, the Fishtown Area Business Association's president who served ahead of his. Brandon Tap and Johana Brende's. His reply? Because that's why Fishtown is called Fishtown. From the 1330s through the early 1980s, catching steel was their main way up the list when it came to spawning new neighborhoods, mainly in the "fish" industry. "The fish is central to the history of Fishtown," says Karpot.

Overfishing and pollution eventually reduced swarms of shad in local waters to a trickle. Still, to many, spring and spring will taste like fish. This oily, bony member of the herring family

Oyster House's Sea Monk, the third generation of Monk family restaurants, aims to serve food saysilence who ask after it typically "remember it from their childhoods." Younger customers who order food are asked if they like ketchup. "If they say they hate full-flavored fish, we'll alter them. In neither case does," says Monk. "There's no point in wasting good fish." First-time shed rose and more are never, especially the way Oyster House cooks it, which is only partly oven-don't (see page 10).

Cyster House is typical of the restaurants that served lunch and dinner, says Sam D'Angelo CEO of the joint venture of food wholesalers Gerardo & Son. Young chef's at trendy places "don't know what to do with it," says D'Angelo. recall anyone who dreamed a shadfish dinner and wasn't left with a pile of fishies. The quick trip from East Coast states that still serve viable shad catches makes sense "a great value," D'Angelo says. Still, the short season and inaccessibility were, coupled with the fish's strong taste, make some restaurants wary.

Kriegel shares their concentrated supply. At last year's Shad Fest, stockpile only two hours to run out of the 50 pounds of shad he got to make sandwiches. Of course, many of his customers were first timers. This year's shad should be a shorter tow that more people know what they're in for.

www.sciencedirect.com

FLOUR POWER: Owner Joseph "Joey" Nuccio's L'Amore makes the dough the right way at Superior Pasta Company in the Italian Market.

1997-98, 1998-99, 1999-00, 2000-01, 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24, 2024-25, 2025-26, 2026-27, 2027-28, 2028-29, 2029-30, 2030-31, 2031-32, 2032-33, 2033-34, 2034-35, 2035-36, 2036-37, 2037-38, 2038-39, 2039-40, 2040-41, 2041-42, 2042-43, 2043-44, 2044-45, 2045-46, 2046-47, 2047-48, 2048-49, 2049-50, 2050-51, 2051-52, 2052-53, 2053-54, 2054-55, 2055-56, 2056-57, 2057-58, 2058-59, 2059-60, 2060-61, 2061-62, 2062-63, 2063-64, 2064-65, 2065-66, 2066-67, 2067-68, 2068-69, 2069-70, 2070-71, 2071-72, 2072-73, 2073-74, 2074-75, 2075-76, 2076-77, 2077-78, 2078-79, 2079-80, 2080-81, 2081-82, 2082-83, 2083-84, 2084-85, 2085-86, 2086-87, 2087-88, 2088-89, 2089-90, 2090-91, 2091-92, 2092-93, 2093-94, 2094-95, 2095-96, 2096-97, 2097-98, 2098-99, 2099-00, 2100-01, 2101-02, 2102-03, 2103-04, 2104-05, 2105-06, 2106-07, 2107-08, 2108-09, 2109-10, 2110-11, 2111-12, 2112-13, 2113-14, 2114-15, 2115-16, 2116-17, 2117-18, 2118-19, 2119-20, 2120-21, 2121-22, 2122-23, 2123-24, 2124-25, 2125-26, 2126-27, 2127-28, 2128-29, 2129-30, 2130-31, 2131-32, 2132-33, 2133-34, 2134-35, 2135-36, 2136-37, 2137-38, 2138-39, 2139-40, 2140-41, 2141-42, 2142-43, 2143-44, 2144-45, 2145-46, 2146-47, 2147-48, 2148-49, 2149-50, 2150-51, 2151-52, 2152-53, 2153-54, 2154-55, 2155-56, 2156-57, 2157-58, 2158-59, 2159-60, 2160-61, 2161-62, 2162-63, 2163-64, 2164-65, 2165-66, 2166-67, 2167-68, 2168-69, 2169-70, 2170-71, 2171-72, 2172-73, 2173-74, 2174-75, 2175-76, 2176-77, 2177-78, 2178-79, 2179-80, 2180-81, 2181-82, 2182-83, 2183-84, 2184-85, 2185-86, 2186-87, 2187-88, 2188-89, 2189-90, 2190-91, 2191-92, 2192-93, 2193-94, 2194-95, 2195-96, 2196-97, 2197-98, 2198-99, 2199-00, 2200-01, 2201-02, 2202-03, 2203-04, 2204-05, 2205-06, 2206-07, 2207-08, 2208-09, 2209-10, 2210-11, 2211-12, 2212-13, 2213-14, 2214-15, 2215-16, 2216-17, 2217-18, 2218-19, 2219-20, 2220-21, 2221-22, 2222-23, 2223-24, 2224-25, 2225-26, 2226-27, 2227-28, 2228-29, 2229-30, 2230-31, 2231-32, 2232-33, 2233-34, 2234-35, 2235-36, 2236-37, 2237-38, 2238-39, 2239-40, 2240-41, 2241-42, 2242-43, 2243-44, 2244-45, 2245-46, 2246-47, 2247-48, 2248-49, 2249-50, 2250-51, 2251-52, 2252-53, 2253-54, 2254-55, 2255-56, 2256-57, 2257-58, 2258-59, 2259-60, 2260-61, 2261-62, 2262-63, 2263-64, 2264-65, 2265-66, 2266-67, 2267-68, 2268-69, 2269-70, 2270-71, 2271-72, 2272-73, 2273-74, 2274-75, 2275-76, 2276-77, 2277-78, 2278-79, 2279-80, 2280-81, 2281-82, 2282-83, 2283-84, 2284-85, 2285-86, 2286-87, 2287-88, 2288-89, 2289-90, 2290-91, 2291-92, 2292-93, 2293-94, 2294-95, 2295-96, 2296-97, 2297-98, 2298-99, 2299-00, 2300-01, 2301-02, 2302-03, 2303-04, 2304-05, 2305-06, 2306-07, 2307-08, 2308-09, 2309-10, 2310-11, 2311-12, 2312-13, 2313-14, 2314-15, 2315-16, 2316-17, 2317-18, 2318-19, 2319-20, 2320-21, 2321-22, 2322-23, 2323-24, 2324-25, 2325-26, 2326-27, 2327-28, 2328-29, 2329-30, 2330-31, 2331-32, 2332-33, 2333-34, 2334-35, 2335-36, 2336-37, 2337-38, 2338-39, 2339-40, 2340-41, 2341-42, 2342-43, 2343-44, 2344-45, 2345-46, 2346-47, 2347-48, 2348-49, 2349-50, 2350-51, 2351-52, 2352-53, 2353-54, 2354-55, 2355-56, 2356-57, 2357-58, 2358-59, 2359-60, 2360-61, 2361-62, 2362-63, 2363-64, 2364-65, 2365-66, 2366-67, 2367-68, 2368-69, 2369-70, 2370-71, 2371-72, 2372-73, 2373-74, 2374-75, 2375-76, 2376-77, 2377-78, 2378-79, 2379-80, 2380-81, 2381-82, 2382-83, 2383-84, 2384-85, 2385-86, 2386-87, 2387-88, 2388-89, 2389-90, 2390-91, 2391-92, 2392-93, 2393-94, 2394-95, 2395-96, 2396-97, 2397-98, 2398-99, 2399-00, 2400-01, 2401-02, 2402-03, 2403-04, 2404-05, 2405-06, 2406-07, 2407-08, 2408-09, 2409-10, 2410-11, 2411-12, 2412-13, 2413-14, 2414-15, 2415-16, 2416-17, 2417-18, 2418-19, 2419-20, 2420-21, 2421-22, 2422-23, 2423-24, 2424-25, 2425-26, 2426-27, 2427-28, 2428-29, 2429-30, 2430-31, 2431-32, 2432-33, 2433-34, 2434-35, 2435-36, 2436-37, 2437-38, 2438-39, 2439-40, 2440-41, 2441-42, 2442-43, 2443-44, 2444-45, 2445-46, 2446-47, 2447-48, 2448-49, 2449-50, 2450-51, 2451-52,



Case Presentations

USE YOUR NOODLE

A guide to fresh-made pasta in South Philadelphia. By Brian Shreffler

through a small hole in the wall into the hallway. I am a coward to a fault.

Place like Tallulah's, at North and Carpenter, stock the uppers after the window frames are in one Superior Pools, near Ninth and Christian, takes another approach, but has no problems drawing attention with its trailer serving. Visit either spot — or Ninth Fresh Pools and Mattie's Icebox Pools, both along 12th Street — and you'll walk away with both parts that approximate what you want in the poolshed.

It starts and ends with three simple steps: oats, high gluten flour, fresh eggs and water. But what separates fresh-made pasta and the drier stuff you get at the supermarket, as any master will tell you, are flavor and feel. "It has an immediate texture and cooks in a fraction of the time, and because it's more porous, it holds the sauce better," says Tollara's manager, Dave Emerson, of Rochester.

It takes skill to ensure someone eating your pasta can truly taste that egg and that feta. Also relying on a mastery of paradoxical texture — the best pasta somehow has a pillowy bite and a resilient firmness at the same time — South Philly's pasta-makers maintain a healthy relationship with numerous local meat markets (Good luck

outline that list, as well as with the representative

Each restaurant follows a similar production schedule, with particular items made fresh at certain times throughout the week. What's more, most places have a high turnover that ensures the dishes served here, often with local ingredients, are fresh.

Here's our guide to South Florida's best beachside shops.

► SUPERIOR PASTA | 505 Christian St., 215-407-3304, superiorpasta.com

Founded by an Italian immigrant in 1942, Joseph "Joey" Nardone took over Superior in 2009, leaving a job in the corporate world.

Garnaville: Superior calls this their "hidden treasure."

NAOMI ITO, AND
JENNIFER CHAPMAN
ATC DENTAL NET/
NAOMI ITO

Hot Pepper Linguine An infusion of pepper flakes ensures that these pasta will stand out in any sauce. The heat comes in varying degrees.

General: These little black, enameled with metal, are treated with a shallow edge (think macramé-chromosomes you can eat). Superior's make for a hearty dish, with the knots perfectly engineered to work on everyone.

Gargantuan Eggplant Rollat Though not the ingredients you'd expect blended with nectar in ravioli, this pasta's incorporation of eggplants and anchovies is a winner.

www.namdev.com an independent firm

The best pastas boast both a pillowy bite and a welcome firmness.

► **TALLUTO'S** | 1445 North St. | 212-697-0967 | tallutos.com

Joe A. M. Talluto, with the help of his son, Joe Jr., carries on a tradition started by Joe Sr.'s grandfather at one location in Brooklyn. Finally, in 1967, numerous locations sprang up in the 1980s, including the shop on North (which uses pasta machines imported from Italy), as well as a production location now located not far from the airport.

Pepperoni: These noodles hold tight with just the right amount of plummy Sicilian-style meatballs and grab a pound of loads from Rapa's and you're on your way to a great night.

Pumpkin Ravioli: You can taste the season in the eggs like no other ravioli with whole milk ricotta and Parmesan. If you don't have any sauce, enjoy them pasta style, with butter, maple syrup and cinnamon.

Agrodolci: These hard agrodolci make for one of the tastiest pasta appetizers around. The pasta is so crunchy that they're perfect with olive oil, pepper, onion and Parmesan-Bolognese sprinkled on top.

► **NINO'S FRESH PASTA** | 1714 Myrtle St. | 212-467-9656

Wider baskets line the shelves behind Nino's counter, holding the bread they bake fresh daily. An adjacent room is stacked with a huge of 10-plus year old prosciutto, including a Roman origin, including a massive prosciutto strutto fit with custom die cutters for extra like family and guests.

Shrimp Ravioli: A robust flavor permeates the ravioli with chunks of shrimp that doesn't restrict the ricotta. Hearty enough to enjoy through a rich vodka sauce.

Spinach Ravioli: The earthy spinach flavor in these creamy ricotta ravioli goes on the palate, tastes like the pasta maker just came back from the farmer's market.

Pasta: Pasta when they have this fresh. Soft and pliant, it surprises with its excellent texture after its prosciutto cooking time (20 minutes) — which, like the walk down to Nino's, is well worth it.

► **MATTEO'S**
1234 River St. | 212-697-7666 | matteosdunham.com

In 1965, Robert Matteo Jr. took over the business, founded by his father, former short-order worker Robert Sr., in 1978. Centuries past the area where they keep the ravioli, tortellini and other assorted pastas and you may just catch sight, through the glass partition, of the mannequin they prep fresh every day.

Roasted Pepper Ravioli: Parmesan, ricotta and roasted pepper group-hug to your benefit, with the last flavor coming through in the right manner.

Chicken Ravioli: This creamy ricotta ravioli deserves a seat at the table with the big boys of North Street. Ricotta and mannequin get equal attention here.

Lebanese Ravioli: Some like some is everything in blend of vermicelli, feta cheese and tomato sauce — employed to control by most — allow for an even balance of flavor, which Matteo's arguments with ricotta and Romano.

(Editorial: www.nytimes.com)



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[the week to eat]

[food & drink]

WHAT'S COOKING



Flavors of the Avenue Sat., April 24, noon-5 p.m., \$20 in advance (\$25 at the door) ► Flavors of the Avenue is more than taking over East Passyunk for a day of local food. Run or chase, stroll under tents and try samples of signature dishes and drinks from more than a dozen restaurants and bars, like The Social, Marra Mare (above), Le Vein, Pael, Pael and more. A craft beer, baby, on show and live music will also entertain throughout the day. **East Passyunk Avenue** between Dickson and Morris streets, 215-336-1450, eastpassyunk.com.

Leukemia and Lymphoma Society Fundraiser at Yards Brewing Co. Fri., April 23, 7-10:30 p.m., \$25 ► Do a good-drinking deed by taking part in this fundraiser to benefit the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. It's an evening of music, entertainment and drink toppings at Yards. A ticket gets you a beer, water/tea, snacks and access to the brewery. Tickets must be purchased ahead online, go to bit.ly/yards. **Yards Brewing Co.**, 301 N. Delaware Ave., 215-634-2600, yardsbrewing.com.

South African Wine Tasting at Lacroix Fittchenhouse Mon., April 26, 6-8 p.m., \$20 ► Dine with South African gods at Lacroix, where sommelier Eric Lacroix will guide a tasting of four wines. Learn about nuances of the region while sampling Pinotage, Cabernet Sauvignon, Shann and a Verde de Lant and Blau. Following the tasting, you can catch the restaurant's three-course \$56 grandee from chef Jason Carbonek. **Lacroix, Fittchenhouse Hotel**, 310 West Bethesda Square, 215-796-2532, lacroixfittchenhouse.com.

River & Glen Seafood Dinner at Bar Ferdinand Sun., April 25, 6 p.m., \$65 ► Chef David Kase has created a seasonal five-course menu featuring fresh products from local supplier River & Glen. Start with Mylar system-wired three ways and blowfish mussels with roasted potato, terrapin and breadsticks. Continue the feast with Great South Bay hazel-honeyed clams, pan-seared scallops with blue grass-stuffed omelette mushrooms, and line-caught Chatham Bay cod. Service industry folks can enjoy a 25 percent discount, and an optional wine pairing is available for \$30 more. **Bar Ferdinand, Leichter Walk**, 1420 N. Second St., 215-522-1233, barferdinand.com.

—Alexandra Hershkovitz

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food & drink

feeding frenzy

by Drew Lerner



• NOW SEATING

Old City Asien-Bistro | James Lee, who once Black Dog Cafe on Skippack Village, has tapped into the city taking over what was Augie for this straightforward Vietnamese/Chester/Thai eatery. The menu, which tops out at \$20, features a smorg of fresh seafood. Asian favorites, including all manner of sushi (a "Pon Island" roll, topped with yam kumquat mayo), Thai curries and well-fried dishes like garlic chicken, shrimp or scallops. They offer a \$9 Bento Box lunch deal daily from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., open daily from 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. 2006 Market St., 215-325-6322

Twenty Manning Grill | Audrey Claire Trudman has revamped her brother's lounge Twenty Manning into a more laid-back neighborhood eatery, lightening up the service (white-washed wood paneling, white ground-sisal on the walls, etc.) and introducing a new, raw American menu. Chef/partner King Babin has developed new dishes like herb-crusted tomato gauchas with pine-apple-kale salad, pan-seared scallops with pink grapefruit, squash and yellow pepper olive oil, and once a signature 6-ounce burger served on a cutting board. There'll also be rotating "plates of the day" to showcase fresh specials. The original Twenty Manning menu a mean cocktail, and that hasn't changed with the redo, either (signature will include a perfect martini with blackout and a hard sugar). The new-look restaurant opens daily at 5 p.m. 261 S. 29th St., 215-731-8900, twentymanaging.com

Union | Open since the first week of April, Kabaf Alonof's eatery-centric cafe caters to tea lovers and veg. eaters. They have an international selection of more than 20 teas, plus espresso and fresh, seasonal pastries (Pineapple-green and black tea to serve tea), as well as bubble tea, or on the way. For eats, they're doing veg-friendly sandwiches and soups (Vietnamese-style tofu burger, tomato-soup and miso) and have a selection of hot meats, like chicken, turkey, ham, bologna and smoked beef. Hours: Tue.-Fri., 7:30 a.m.-9 p.m., Sat., 9 a.m.-9 p.m., Sun., 10 a.m.-6 p.m., closed Mon. 205 S. 4th St., 215-222-8788, union.com

At a Top Place and restaurant news from citypaper.net or call 215-335-4004, ext. 218

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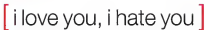
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